

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



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THE WORSHIP OF GOD

BY

J. R. TEEFY, C.S.B.

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The Worship of God

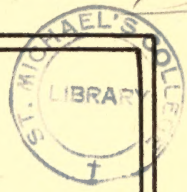


A Course of Lenten Sermons

By the
Very Rev. John R. Teefy
C.S.B.

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President of St. Michael's College, Toronto



New York

Joseph F. Wagner



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*To those of his old Students
who are now in the Holy Priesthood
this booklet
is affectionately dedicated
by the Author*

*Feast of Our Lady
of Lourdes 1902*

The Worship of God.

A COURSE OF SEVEN LENTEN SERMONS, INCLUDING A SERMON FOR
GOOD FRIDAY.

(WORSHIP OF GOD. WORSHIP OF FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITY.
PRAYER. THE MASS. THE SUFFERINGS OF OUR LORD:
THE SUPREME WORSHIP, SACRIFICE AND PRAYER.)

I. THE WORSHIP OF GOD.

"The Lord God thou shalt adore and Him only shalt thou serve."—St. Matth.
iv, 10.

SYNOPSIS.—The necessity of worship. Introduction. a. The dependence of the creature. b. Adoration and religion.

God the plenitude of all being and of all right. a. All creatures must submit, man by the surrender of will. b. The refusal to believe or submit. The objection of science. c. These objections founded on false history, false philosophy, false ideas of liberty. b. The testimony of conscience.

God the plenitude of perfection. a. Bankruptcy of science in trying to satisfy man's thirst for perfection. b. What God's perfection holds for believers—knowledge, love, strength.

Nature of worship of God. a. Must be in all ages—sometimes misguided. b. Perfected by the Incarnation. c. Worship of body and soul. d. In all places, but especially in His temples. e. Obstacles, sin and the absence of God. Both given remedies through Christ's death and His abiding presence.

It was with these sublime and forcible words that our divine Lord disconcerted Satan and put him to flight. Their truth not only secured our Lord from any further polluting touch; it gave the keynote of His mission upon earth. "The Lord God thou shalt adore." These words not only secured the banishment of temptation and sin; they form the underlying obligation which springs from the essential and necessary relations existing between the Creator and His Creatures. If Satan had adored the Lord God: if man had always served Him: if the world would bend its thoughts, its will, its heart to the God who made it, and still more to Him who redeemed it, the history of created intelligence would have entirely changed its course.

To be a creature is to have an existence but not to be independent. God could not create a being, and thrust it away, so that it would be entirely outside of, away from, God. Every creature is encompassed by the power, wisdom, goodness and love of Him who first gave it being. The Creator's hand is the creature's home. The creature has primary, essential relations with the Creator. To be a rational moral creature is to know these relations, to let their sanctifying influence direct our life and order all our thoughts, and lead us on still more and more to that term which is at once our end, our perfection and our happiness. It is to thrill with the duties which the divine Presence imposes upon us: and to pay homage to His divine title of Creator by the transcendent esteem and faithful service which our frail being and weak activities will render to Him in adoration, praise, gratitude and love.

This adoration is the centre of all morality: and the virtue of religion sums up its acts, and voices its fullest expression. Nature testifies to it. Grace and revelation confirm its truth, binding the soul to God with closer bonds. And they offer light and help which render the fulfilment of duty more easy, and place the hope of reward beyond all play of fancy or dream of happiness. Thus does religion transform itself, and rise to those heights where all is spiritual, eternal, divine. Nor will it do for souls baptized, who have a right to such treasures, to dwell upon the mere natural virtue of religion. "Nature inclineth a man to creatures, grace draweth to God and to all virtues." Let us therefore consider religion as the fruit of that heavenly branch, which, engrafted upon the wild olive of human nature, has become for all men the tree of life, of which if any man eat he shall not taste death forever. And we find, as we glance with dazzled eyes upon its divine height, a twofold source from which it springs. It is with this double source of religion and its extended application that I wish to occupy your attention this morning.

The soul contemplating God by the double light of faith and reason discovers plenitude, all plenitude and nothing but plenitude—a plenitude of being, right and perfection. God is. He is the fullness of being. There is nothing in Him which is not necessarily, absolutely, infinite. All that He seems to have He is. From Him comes all being. God and His works, God and His gifts—these are all that ever have been or ever will be. God is the absolute Being. He is the principle, the uncaused Being, the cause of all

being. And as He is the plenitude of being He is the plenitude of right. For this double reason does He impose the duty of worship upon every creature.

But though every creature depends upon His sovereignty, every creature does not offer homage—only those with intelligence and liberty. Other creatures proclaim God: they cannot know Him. The heavens tell His glory, and day uttereth speech to day. They are subject to His law, but they do not submit themselves to it. Man can know Him who is, and yield his free will to God's universal dominion. God is. Can man ignore God?—be indifferent to those demands which religion is sure to exact? The tingling pressure of His omnipresence, the dread realities of His stern judgments, the rigid demand of a strict account of every idle word are hardly counted by most men in the proposition. To the majority, He is as if He were not. They forget God. God is. It is sad to think that God has to be always struggling to keep Himself, be it ever so little, in our thoughts; for so many things conspire against His rights and dominion over us. At the present day legislators, educationists, other leaders of men teach our young people to ignore and forget God.

Scientists, more bold than the rest, find not the presence of God in the origin of things. And where the name of God occurs in the history of our race that name is but the vain image of fear. The idea of God, they say, is not primitive and still less universal. Fetichism was the first phase of religion. The next step was the worship of ancestors. Gods grew out of the terror people felt for their dead ancestors. Ghosts became deities, and lower deities became higher, until at last monotheism asserted itself through Abraham, Moses, and the prophets of Israel. To religion succeeded metaphysics, the age of abstract reasoning, another step in so-called progress and freedom. But it was reserved for more modern times to break the last shackle of superstition binding the human mind. The complete liberation was gained when metaphysics yielded to positive science. Then the idols of fear and superstition were broken. Science was to make all things new. Men were to worship humanity and were to find a solution for all problems of life in the halls of earthly wisdom.

If God is not, all this may be progress, truth, freedom. But we do not read thus the pages of history. God is, and he was in the beginning the illumination of the world. Darkness fell upon the

earth when men turned their eyes from the divine light and let go His guiding hand. Human passion, national feeling, the spirit of naturalism—all stand in history as dark mountains overshadowing the light, and throwing mists about their base where walk the children of men. And if we turn from external history and interrogate our own conscience, the voice of adoration is heard there: "O Lord, Thou hast proved me, and known me; Thou hast understood my thoughts afar off: Thou hast formed and laid Thine hand upon me: I will praise Thee, for Thou art fearfully magnified: Wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knoweth them right well."

God is plenitude of being and of right. He is also the plenitude of perfection. All truth, all greatness, beauty, and goodness find in Him their transcendent type, their inexhaustible source. Whatever can enrich, perfect, illumine any being is in God, in its highest reality, its most absolute state, its first principle. It is God Himself: and it is God, because God is. O plenitude of being and perfection! We adore Thee, we praise Thee, we give Thee thanks for Thy great glory.

What is man in presence of this unfathomable abyss of light and power and love? Man, such as science in its theory of evolution presents him—man hungering for good, and finding everywhere, within and without, faded images of the happiness he dreams of? What is such a man in presence of God? In proportion as he detaches himself from his animal condition his desires quicken, his ambition rises, his destiny looms up before him, more an object to be dreaded than a term to be attained. Such is man as sketched by science. He would not know the voice of the living, true God—nor would he dare to appear in that divine presence. He would vanish at the word of truth: The Lord God thou shalt adore. He forms an ideal, and prostrates himself before the idol of his own brain. The ideal fails him. The reed he leaned upon breaks beneath him. Disappointed he turns away in disgust from all religion, and fixes his hopes, his energies and his affections upon the present. The thought which should have elevated him has degraded him. And the hope which should have thrilled him leaves mind and soul dry and void forevermore. Nature, as he reads her volume, seems to him but "a hollow form with empty hand." And in his pride he will not look for Him whose "name is admirable over the whole earth." Still less will he bend the knee, and say with heart and soul and mind and strength: God is—I adore His

plenitude of being and perfection. That would be the first act of love. But shutting his eyes to the light, he cannot love; and he knows not how to adore. Leave such a man to his blindness. Let us turn to a baptized soul, to one who in mind and will gives assent to our proposition: God is. What is that man's stand as he contemplates the plenitude of God's perfections? Their crystal depths lie in unfathomable abysses beneath his wondering gaze. He is lost in the hidden treasures of their countless variety, and baffled at their infinite simplicity. Wisdom, power, holiness, justice, love he finds to be but names for God. He feels his own want and misery, yet he is not overcome. The light illumines, but does not dazzle. Sovereignty and majesty awe him without terrifying him. No created good satisfies him. He turns away from earth. With all the hunger of his being he yearns for a brighter vision and a closer union with God. He bends the knee; he adores. In that adoration is praise; in that praise, love: and in that love, union. His heart thrills within him, that his own poverty and want are enriched with his Creator's richest treasures, and his own ignorance illumined with the wisdom from on high, and his own weakness strengthened by his entire dependence upon the Omnipotent.

O magnificent Creator! Blessed be Thou, that Thou art my Creator, my first principle! That it should be given to me to know Thee, to catch a glimpse of Thy infinite perfections—eternal thanks to Thy blessed Name! But that Thou shouldst stoop down to Thy poor creature, and make Thy own attributes his eternal inheritance—this is surely mystery upon mystery.

We therefore see, my dear brethren, that religion, adoration rests upon the being of God. God is—therefore I unloose the latchet of my shoe, I uncover my head. Thus in voluntary annihilation I offer the homage of my frail being before the majesty of immutable, absolute being. What is the contents of this homage which is at once a creature's duty, his perfection and his happiness?

It is universal. There never was a time, or race, or civilization upon which this duty did not devolve. Strange is the story of the manner in which this duty has been performed. Men have worshipped the work of their own hands; they have erected altars to deities whom they knew not. Their sacrifices and prayers have many and many a time been accompanied by the most repulsive rites. Their adoration has been intermittent. Still as we look at the monuments of the various races of men, we find worship even where the

object was most vague and the expression most unworthy. But when the knowledge of God came in all the brightness and fulness of the Incarnation; when the true adorer of the Father set up His kingdom upon the holy mountain, then was the word of holy worship put into the heart and lips of religion. Esther-like, religion put on "her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the King's house, over against the King's hall. And when the King saw Esther the queen standing she pleased his eyes, and he held out to her the golden sceptre, which he held in his hand." This worship was to take possession of the whole man. Intellect and free-will were to be the special gifts of homage. The affections of the heart were to afford it material for the consuming of its victim. And as man is both body and soul, the body takes part in the adoration, as in the case of the martyrs the body played an important part. This too is more necessary to fix the attention and to heal the inconstancy of our nature. Pomp of ceremony, grandeur of vestments, everything concurs to elevate the soul and maintain piety. They are the robes and voice of religion, and the temple is its abode. True it may be that the Divinity needs no temple as a monarch needs a palace. The starry sky or the thick forest may be the vaulted roof and woody aisle of the great Creator's temple. But we have need of special places which we set apart for holy worship. Man is a social being, and therefore his adoration has not merely been the homage of the individual, but of the family and society. All nations, all races, have gathered around the altar of Jesus Christ, and presented through the Saviour the homage of true adoration.

Two obstacles stand in the way of worship. They are sin and the absence of God. What would have been the worship of man if he had never sinned, it is hard to say, but sweet to imagine. Sin came, and the whole relation of man to God was changed. Man is a child of wrath—his worship is not pleasing: his gift is not acceptable. Some one must appear for us. The younger brother, Jacob, must put on the purple of the elder brother, Christ. Worship is purchased by the Precious Blood of the Lamb. It has its value in the cross.

The second obstacle is the absence of God. God is very near to us, yet He is far off; He is unseen. We need to hear His voice, to have some more definite presence than is to be found of God in the material creation. Thanks be to God for His unutterable gift.

He still abides with us in that wonderful presence of the Blessed Sacrament, to be our own friend and guide, and still more to be the world's adorer of the eternal Blessed Trinity. This it is which has made worship easy, intense and meritorious. This is the undying, perfect fulfilment of His own blessed word: "The Lord God thou shalt adore and Him only shalt thou serve."

II. WORSHIP OF FAITH.

"He that believeth in the Son of God hath the testimony of God in himself."—I. Ep. St. John v. 10.

SYNOPSIS.—As there is a closer relation between God and the rational creature than that established by unaided nature, another order is required. This is the supernatural order. By its action upon our soul our destiny is changed, and our relationship with God deified and perfected. The foundation of this relation is faith. Considering faith as a virtue, we deem it the adoration paid by our intelligence to God's truth. It is the reason illumined with the grace of God, and inclining will and heart to bow before the Eternal, Absolute Truth. Secondly, faith is the knowledge of God. In spite of false opinions, the knowledge of God is possible. Reason cannot know God without aid. God without giving us here a face to face vision, gives us evidence enough of His revelation to expect our assent. This assent is therefore reasonable, and ought to be firm in proportion to the truths themselves. Conclusion.

The relation which all rational beings hold to God is not merely that of creatures to their Creator, as if we stood outside, and gazed upon God, adored Him, and acknowledged His dominion and sovereignty. It is far closer. This is the vestibule of religion's temple. The holy of holies is within. There is a far more intimate relation between God and His creature than that presented by unaided reason. God has not created us merely with the bare, unaided power of knowing and loving Him, but He has leavened that power with the august and sanctifying leaven of the supernatural, until the whole mass is leavened. He wishes to dwell in us by means of gifts and qualities which, while they are of themselves created, really mean His own special presence and habitation in the soul. We become in very truth His temples, the place where His glory dwelleth, "the partakers of the divine nature." Our destinies are lifted up so that if we are true to these gifts, our eye shall gaze forever upon the Beatific Vision, and our heart thrill with unending, conscious union with Bliss supernatural. There is thus another order

than that of nature. In fact man was never left in the pure order of nature. He has been, to use a technical phrase, concreated in a state above it. A divine ray from the light ineffable, a spark from the burning, unconsumed wood of the Deity has been communicated to man by God's free gift and bounty. It is sanctifying because it renders man holy. It is a grace because it is a gift over and above nature. It is the adoption of sons, by which the relationship of man with God, of the rational creature with the Creator, is changed, deified, and perfected. It is the washing in the Blood of the Lamb. It is the wedding garment of the soul in that eternal marriage which the great king made for His son. Thus, my dear brethren, whilst the temple rests upon the solid foundation of our nature and faculties, its innermost courts are the direct action of God's Holy Spirit. These courts, where alone can be found the adopted children of grace, the royal priesthood—these courts have faith for their foundation. As the principle of natural religion is the natural power of man's intelligence, so the principle of the supernatural order, of those sacred relations which our Blessed Lord came to establish between the soul and His Father, is faith. Jesus demands faith from all. Nothing exempts people from it, nothing supplies its place. Neither moral virtue, nor genius, science nor human glory of any kind can, without faith, be acceptable to the Eternal Father: "Without faith it is impossible to please God." It is a question of life and death: "He that believeth not shall be condemned." "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith that worketh by charity."

Now as faith is the first principle in the supernatural order, so is it the primary virtue and quality in those interior sacred relations between God and the soul. It is the adoration of our intellect—the homage which our reason renders to the absolute, infinite truth of God. It is the clear, definite knowledge which the soul possesses of things divine. Let us dwell this morning upon this double view of faith, and derive some practical conclusions. Before analyzing any of these points, however, it is necessary to have a true notion of this great virtue.

There is nothing so common, so necessary, so useful as faith. Individual and social life, right, justice are all subordinate to that faith or confidence which we have in one another. The child believes its parents, the pupil his teacher. History rests upon the veracity and narration of witnesses, and positive sciences derive their

value from the observations of others. This is human faith. Let us speak, however, of divine faith. It is doubly strange that what we deem so reasonable and clear in other matters is called unreasonable and is thrown into confusion in the great question of religion. Why are we so ready to have faith in man and not in God? Is our intelligence the only source of truth? All is confusion when we examine the views held by such philosophers as Kant and Hegel upon faith, or even the views of those who put the question upon a more theological basis. Faith cannot be a mere subjective instinct, sentiment or conviction devoid of external motive and proof of credibility. Such a theory could not fail to call down the criticism of unbelievers and the irreligious. A wise man, says our Lord, builds his house upon a rock. And that rock is Christ. Faith is built upon the word of God,—that written word which forms the history of God's action in regard to the human race; and still more upon that unwritten, uncreated Word who was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, of whose fulness we have all received, who is the perfecter of our faith, and "in whom also believing you were signed with the Holy Spirit of promise." "Faith," says the Council of Trent, "is an infused, supernatural habit inclining the intellect to firmly assent to the truths revealed by God and proposed by the Church, on account of God, the Revealer." God is, therefore, the object of our faith. God is all truth; and, therefore, the intellect of man by the infused gift of God acknowledging this primary truth bows down in perfect adoration before the plenitude of absolute truth. No knowledge can stand before Him who is the splendor of His Father and the glory of His substance—in whom are found the treasures of infinite wisdom and truth. No assent can be wrested from its steadfast purpose when dictated by faith. It has been the constancy of the martyrs, the wisdom of the doctors, the obedience of the confessors, the chaste religion and fervor of the virgins—the adoration of all, to the eternal truth of the living God. Faith is an ear with which the soul may hear the secrets of heaven, and the new canticle of God's wonders. It is an eye: the eternal sonship of Jesus, the crimson love of His precious blood, the courtyards of His Kingdom, the illumination of His glory—these require the eye of faith. "As the eyes of the servant upon his master, so are our eyes unto the Lord until He have mercy upon us." It is the reason illumined with the dawn of that splendor whose glorious noontide is the beatific vision. "It is the commencement in us," says St.

Thomas, "of that life eternal, causing the assent of our intellect to things that appear not." In all—ear and eye and wondrous vision—it is the submission and adoration of the intellect to the voice, the truth and light of God. What is it to believe in God? to give up the whole soul to Him in exchange for His blessed Word? Not the intelligence alone, but will and affection likewise bow down before Him. This is adoration, living faith, submission complete to that absolute truth before whom all else is false. "O God, I believe, help Thou my unbelief."

Faith, secondly, is knowledge of God. There are some thinkers outside of the Church—philosophers rather than theologians—who maintain that when we know a thing we condition it. Now to know God is to condition Him. But God being infinite, absolute, cannot be conditioned. He, therefore, cannot be known, although He may be the object of our belief. The consequence of such a theory is to separate knowledge from belief; and in the ultimate to exalt knowledge as the intellectual act alone worthy of man, and degrade belief as unintellectual and opposed to man's freedom. It is hardly necessary to criticise this theory of knowledge. Man's knowledge may, and does, condition his own mind, but not the object known. When a man knows that there is a judgment which he must pass, his mind is most seriously conditioned and modified by his knowledge. The knowledge of God in a similar manner modifies the intelligence of man himself, but produces no modification in God. To use the language of philosophers, this relation is only logical in God, whilst it is real in the mind of man. Being an act of human intelligence, the knowledge of God perfects the intellect of man by the double reason of the object itself and the very act. Is not the knowledge of God possible? Every entity, every being is the object of our intelligence. Is the Supreme Being alone to be excluded? Every being is related to an intellect by reason of truth. Has the Supreme Truth no relation to our poor intellect? True we begin our knowledge in the world of sense, and we cannot by our own natural powers attain to the essence of that Supreme Being, to the interior of that absolute Truth, in whom all is infinite, perfect, simple. Reason has a slight knowledge of God; but it is vague, inconstant, flickering. The mind needs a further illumination, a higher perfection, a more powerful energy in order to know God more definitely. Infusion of gratuitous light, prophetic visions, miraculous works are steady, increasing messages

from heaven, motives of credibility. Does the mind need, claim or justly demand greater evidence? Where would be our merit or our hope if we saw God face to face? The object of faith is the first truth. If that first truth be seen then it is no longer an object of faith, for faith is "the evidence of things that appear not." Better the economy of faith than that of vision or scientific demonstration! Better that the human intellect should bow in adoration and obedience than that it should flaunt its pride before God's eternal truth! Better the sweet message of revelation and gentle mercy and holy salvation than unbelief and doubt, and the eternal unsuccessful war of created mind against uncreated intelligence! There is enough evidence of the unseen world to convince right reason—unprejudiced, unworldly, not seeking self or sensuality. There is in the solitude of the heart a power to hear the voice of God—that voice which has gone forth over the whole earth; that voice which breaketh the cedars of Libanus, and which allures souls to the desert of benevolence, prayer and devout adoration. Most of all is there evidence enough, as the ages advance and the centuries multiply, to recognize the voice of authoritative teaching and the abiding testimony of the Holy Catholic Church, the pillar and ground of truth, the unfailing witness and secure interpreter of God's revelation.

To assent to God's word because it is God's word, to believe in His Church, is not unreasonable. It is the highest and noblest act of our reason whilst we are upon the earth. It is not fashionable or worldly. And many, alas! of the true fold are inclined to minimize its principle. Others turn their back completely upon it and walk no more with Christ. The independence of the human intellect is as idle a boast as the independence of society. There is everywhere a governing body and a body governed. My mind is subject to the laws of thought, and my moral conscience is subject to the eternal principles that govern all moral beings. Virtue is virtue, truth is truth—and I can never turn by my thought virtue into vice, truth into a lie. I am not a law to myself in the judgments of my mind. For me therefore, in peace of soul and simplicity of faith to take the guiding hand of him whom having not seen I believe, is to walk securely. The act may be one of humility, but it is that humility which exalts our intelligence. To stoop thus is in things divine to supplement our mental insufficiency. It is to place the diadem of heavenly light about our soul's brow, and extend our spiritual horizon into the land of eternal day. To give the assent of our will to faith is to crown our first

energies with gifts compared to which our natural powers are, as St. Paul says, infirmities. Reason, therefore, leads us to faith; and on the other hand, faith illumines reason and completes it.

What about the firmness of our assent to faith? Doubt cannot arise in a mind which has assented to the proposition, that such a truth comes from God. The only sign which our blessed Saviour stated should be given to His people was that of His Death and Resurrection. Yet they reviled it, and questioned the truth of the witnesses. It is the same with the Church. She may fulfil her divine mission, administer her sacraments, preach the doctrine of Christ, but her critics are ever ready to find no conclusive proof that her organization is more than that of a human system. This is one source of doubt and weakness in faith. There is another. It is sin. If faith is the knowledge of God, and that knowledge claims our worship and service, then sin is a serious obstacle against faith. In fact, if we accept faith as informed by charity, or living faith, every sin is more or less against faith. But even in a more general way sin acts indirectly to the detriment of informal, dead faith. Take a man who is given to sensuality in any form, and how soon his faith weakens! Piety loses its hold upon him. His will, like a broken reed, inclines to every temptation, and has no firmness for anything except his own passion, and least of all for things spiritual and divine. Take another who is given to reading indiscriminately, who is partial, indeed, to anti-Catholic writers. Their style is more captivating, their diction is more tasteful, less prosaic than the syllogisms and arguments of scholastic philosophers and stern theologians. The opinions of these writers fall in with his own views, for he can hardly be said to know any other. Whatever claim the Church had upon the past, it has no reason to appear in society at present. It is antiquated, good enough for the young man's ancestors in older lands, but of no use in the so-called age of progress. Take such men. Their name is legion. How can the seed of faith grow in such soil? There can be no firmness of assent, no earnest practice. If we turn from the subjective side, and look at the truths themselves, certainly they claim our life, our intelligent, full and free assent rather than denial. To deny them is to deny Christ. The difficulty comes not from the truths themselves, but from the assent of our will. This assent is essentially a subjective act, and, therefore, depends for its firmness not so much upon the intellect as upon the strength and character of the will. Sin weakens the will

more than it darkens the intellect, and, therefore, faith grows weak in the man who gives himself up to any habitual sin. Furthermore, these are days when we have to withstand the sneers of the world, when our faith suffers from the attractions of refined sensuality, and from the false principles of liberalism and indifferentism. Instead of putting God above His creatures, we place Him on a level with them. We put His truth in one arm of the scale, and weigh against it some human opinion. And now that education is so deeply irreligious, so forgetful of God, is encouraged by every power in the civilized world, it is not hard to see that faith is losing its firm hold upon society as well as upon the individual.

The Psalmist sings: "The testimony of the Lord is faithful, giving wisdom to little ones. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing hearts: the commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening the eyes. The judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves—more to be desired than gold and precious stone—sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb." How true is all this of faith! It gives wisdom to the little ones of earth. It rejoices the heart amidst the sorrows of life. It enlightens the darkness of life and the shade of death. It is the adoration of our intelligence to the truth of the Most High. Thank God for it—it is His gift. Guard it well and see that no man take your crown.

III. THE WORSHIP OF HOPE.

"O Lord, thou hast wonderfully constituted me in hope."—Ps. iv.

SYNOPSIS.—*Introduction.* As intellect strives after the yet unattained truth by faith, so will reaches out for yet unattained good by hope.

I. *The object of Hope:* (a) To attain to the enjoyment of God; (b) to receive the means to do so, i.e., graces.

II. *The grounds of our Hope:* (a) The Nature of God Himself; (b) the promises of God in Holy Writ; (c) the pledge of His Son Jesus Christ; (d) the Mass and the Blessed Sacrament; (e) the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

III. *The Qualities of Hope.*—Hope in God first and last, and for all good things.

In studying the nature of the human soul and its activities we recognize two wonderful, central powers, viz.: reason and free-will. These are the faculties which differentiate man from the lower creatures, the faculties which give man authority in the world about

him, the faculties through which he is placed in moral relation with God and his fellows. But tremendous as these faculties are in the sweep of their action and the extent of their sway, they are not a law or perfection unto themselves. Nor on the other hand are they vain energies chasing after phantom joys. The human intellect is not intellect terminated, restful in the quiet, unmoved possession of its object, perfected with all the perfection of which it is capable, actually knowing all that it can know. Its object is the truth. Far beyond where die the echoes of creation's hymn upon the uncreated shore, far beyond where sense has pictured the ideal, there dwells the Infinite Truth in all reality. To it, as to its home, the sojourning reason of man turns, and bends his weary steps in faith and trust. The same is to be said about the will. It of itself is not perfection nor is it actually all the perfection of which, as a will, it is capable. There is a desire, a yearning deep down in our nature, so that the will longs for something toward which it directs the whole man. Our will is not in full possession of its crown, that crown which is both its ornament and its reward. The will seeks for it, strives for it, suffers for it. And the object toward which it directs its energy is the good. Thus in the subject there is the desire, and corresponding to this desire is the object. This is the tendency of intelligent nature in this wayfaring world. This is that indefinite spiritual weight which, while leaving the soul its freedom, attracts it to its object as a desire, an effort, a hope.

Hope is thus the life of our life, "the charm of life's bewildered way." When it springs forth all becomes animated; when it languishes action weakens, and when it dies everything stops. It is a never-setting star. If it shone not upon the cradle, we should curse the new-born child; and if it threw not its rays athwart the grave we should not dare to die. The fact is that hope is the echo of that divine voice: "Son give me thy heart." And as it is impossible there can be any morality or worship without free-will, so it is impossible that hope will not hold a most important and hallowed place among Christian virtues. Jesus Christ came not to destroy. He came to fulfil, to consecrate and to perfect the energies of our moral nature which had been wounded by sin. He vivified this great virtue of hope with His great supernatural gifts. He transformed its object, encouraged its action and secured its foundations in His own Precious Blood. God Himself in His bounty and bliss, in His essential glory and perfection, God Himself has become the food of our

soul in that hunger and desire for happiness which is an instinct of our nature. To know the true and living God, to behold Him face to face, to be partakers of His divine nature, to enjoy the everlasting feast of heaven wherein God the Father with the Son and Holy Ghost is to the Saints complete satiety and perfect happiness: this is the object we hope for. And is this my destiny? "Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou disquiet me? Hope thou in the Lord, for I will yet praise Him." When will this day of eternity shine? He who wills the end wills the means. The second object of our hope is the grace necessary for salvation—that sweet and holy mystery of our justification and actual sanctification in the journey of life, that lifting up of the heart, that outpouring of God's Holy Spirit, the multiplied mercy of pardon, the transcendent love of holy sacrament, the balm of oil on wounded traveler, care of holy Church, touching word of repentance, humble prayer, patient resignation, sanctifying law—these are some of the means God has created for us to reach our high and holy destiny. O precious gifts! O holy bonds uniting us to God and directing our footsteps homeward! O pledges of our final victory in the struggle and combat of life! The Christian is a man of hope. There is a desire after God and a trust in Him which enable him "to glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God—and not only so, but to glory also in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope, and hope confoundeth not."

Let us turn our attention to the formal object of hope. Does it not look like presumption that we poor creatures, sinful creatures at that, can turn to the mountains and ever hope to dwell on their dizzy heights? By what right or claim do we confidently expect to share "in the joy of our Lord," or enter the eternal gates? What is our priesthood that we should stand within the holy of holies? Why do we hope? God, my dear brethren, is our support—God in His nature, His word, His pledge, is the triple ground of our Christian hope.

What is the nature of God? Not such as pure reason by its unsteady light has now and again discovered—but such as revelation declares, such as His eternal Son announced to us? What is this divine nature, then? Power and wisdom and goodness. Nothing daunts Him. Everything obeys His will, everything serves His purpose. Night is but the messenger of day; demons help in the salvation of man. He conquers the world by His cross, and finds im-

mortal life in dying. How can we mistrust God? "O Lord God, almighty King, all things are in Thy power, and there is none that can resist Thy will, if Thou determine to save Israel." God is good—He is love. He is all goodness, all love. To be, to give Himself, to love us, to hold us in the hollow of His hand, and to draw us to Himself—these are the continued mystery of His loving providence in our regard. Nothing hinders Him. Even sin, bold, defiant, foolish, wicked sin turns God's love into compassion, and fills the Father's eyes with tears as He looks for the return of His prodigal child. Sin gives the world a Saviour, turns Him into the Good Samaritan, and purples His love with the crimson of His Precious Blood. Let but the sinner hope: "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Let but the sinner hope, and God's love becomes mercy, and His mercy pardon.

The second ground for our hope is the word of God. You know, my brethren, the value of man's word. There is nothing more binding, nor should there be. It is the bond of society and the basis of all contracts. The child trusts its mother and the disciple his master. The body governed trusts those who govern. We find undoubtedly a majesty and a stability which prove a protection, a refuge and a support. What, then, must be the light, if such be the shadow? What is that eternal, substantial affirmative: *God is?* What certainty, what peace, what security! Read that sacred word of God, that book of books which we call the Bible—read there of prophecy and promise, of type and figure, of synagogue and Church; read there the word that will never pass away, the history of God's dealings with mankind, then let the weak be strengthened, and the bruised reed be healed and the breaking heart consoled. "With the Lord there is plentiful redemption." "All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth." The longing hope of four thousand years is fulfilled, and we have God's word as "an anchor of the soul sure and firm, and which entereth in even within the veil: where the forerunner Jesus is entered for us made a high-priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech." Sin is pardoned: "Though your sins be as scarlet, yet they shall be made white as snow." Prayer is heard, union with God pledged: "Amen, amen, I say unto you if you ask the Father anything in my name it will be given to you." "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him."

There is not only the created written word of God, there is the uncreated Word—the Word by whom all things were made, who was with the Father from the beginning, the consubstantial Son: “God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son: that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting.” His name is Jesus, for He is our Saviour. He is the light—the unfailing light. He is the inexhaustible ocean of pardon and grace. He is the way we must follow, the truth we must believe, the life we must lead. Every step He took upon the earth, every beating of His Sacred Heart, every mystery, crib, cross, tomb, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Capharnaum, Calvary, are the door-posts of wisdom: and blessed is the man who watcheth thereat. These holy consecrated spots are ours—cooling shades beneath the plane-tree, by the fountains where spring the waters of life. None of us can rest there without our heart thrilling with hope. None of us can glance at the crucifix without exclaiming with the apostle: “He hath loved me and He hath delivered Himself up for me.” And as we watch by the open tomb, we know that “He rose for our justification.” Then climbing with Him the hill of Ascension our soul exults that: “He is gone to prepare a place for us, that where He is, we may be also.” O Jesus, Saviour mine, unwritten Word of God, blessed “Hope of penitents, how kind to those who ask Thee, how good to those who seek Thee—but what to those who find Thee?”

Is that all? There is holy Mass, the universal radiation of Christ's bloody sacrifice, the unfailing memorial of His passion, death, and resurrection. It reproduces Jesus, His life, His mysteries, His efficacious prayer and merit—it reproduces all before that Blessed Trinity whom it worships and glorifies, as it reproduces all for the soul that applies the life of its faith and love to the saving wounds of our living Hope. But the Mass is not only sacrifice and worship, it is a sacrament. Jesus who gives Himself to His Father gives Himself to us in holy communion. “He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me and I in him.” What hope, therefore, in the Christian leaving the holy table, bearing within his breast the pledge of eternal life! What hope in the breast of the repentant dying sinner when he receives the sweet viaticum, and starts down the valley of death leaning upon his Saviour and Judge.

There is another pledge of hope—the absolute, personal joy of God, the Holy Ghost. “I will not leave you orphans. I will send

you another Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, who will abide with you forever," the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity whose mission is ever going on among the children of men. This Holy Ghost has been given to us, the permanent good here, whose energy directs our steps as He to our heavenly Father: "They that are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." Brethren dear, the greatest consolation to us in life is this gift of God—the Holy Ghost, whose deepest wish in His mission is your sanctification and salvation. It is His work to labor for it. His glory to succeed in it. I can not dwell longer upon the countless pledges that are given to us by the Holy Ghost—Mary—our life, our sweetness and our hope—holy Mother Church with its hierarchies, its powers and sacraments. Read them all. Read the pages of your own life, the action of holy inspiration and grace upon your heart, your work, your sufferings, your opportunities. Truly the refrain of life's hymn is: "O Lord, Thou hast wonderfully established me in hope."

Let me finally occupy your attention for a few moments with some of the qualities of Christian hope. The first is that our hope is in God. Do not hope for less than Him. If we do then we fail. It is in this sense that every sin is against hope: for when we commit sin we lower our desires, our affections, our happiness to some created object. Be energetic therefore in the hour of temptation when some false pleasure or false hope is being held out to you in exchange for your true home and bliss. Be patient in the hour of suffering; and fix your heart upon Him who is your Hope, the Father of consolation and the God of mercy. Hope for all goods from His hands, all those gifts that can lead you home—those that can strengthen, purify, exalt you. Hope for temporal goods, at least in proportion as they tend to your sanctification and salvation. Hope in God—count not upon creatures; rely not upon yourselves, your talent, your past success. Allege not your misery, your weakness, your falls as a cause of discouragement, a reason for not daring to hope. From the morning watch through the day until nightfall, let Israel hope in the Lord. Hope in Him always. Such confidence will be your greatest worship. Indeed, it is the only true worship. Without it there can be no living faith; and charity is impossible unless there be confidence. Confidence is the acknowledgment of God's perfections and the surrender of ourselves to our dear heavenly Father. Confidence is hope in full bloom. When therefore this confidence becomes the rule and animating force of

our intimate relations with God, what reverence, what calmness, what worship! It is hope bearing fruit—fruit gathered in time of prayer and seasons of work and suffering. All that God does or permits is received in simplicity and good part. God trusts such a soul as that soul trusts Him. The confidence is reciprocal. God gives Himself to it and the soul gives itself up to God with all the energy of its being to do His will and establish His kingdom. This confidence is the flower of true piety and the security which the nature, the word and the pledges of God impart to the soul habitually faithful and devout to the Holy Ghost. Pray for this confidence, work for it, suffer for it. “But I, as a fruitful olive tree in the house of God, have hoped in the mercy of God for ever, yea, for ever and ever. I will praise Thee for ever because Thou hast done it: and I will wait on Thy name, for it is good in the sight of Thy saints.” Amen.

IV. THE WORSHIP OF CHARITY.

“Blessed is the man that findeth wisdom. Her ways are beautiful ways, and all her paths are peaceable. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her, and he that shall retain her shall be blessed.”—Prov. xiii. 13, 17, 18.

SYNOPSIS.—Introduction. The interconnection of the three theological virtues. Love the fulfilling of the Law.

I. The Nature of Charity: (a) Union with God. God's Majesty overpowers, but Love attracts and unites.

II. The Effects of Charity: (a) Elevates the relation between Creator and creature—“not servants but friends”; (b) The strength and consolation of it; (c) God establishes a sort of equality with us; (d) Union of wills through Love; (e) Community of goods. What shall we repay? (f) Charity the life of the soul, its principle activity; (g) Charity is obedience. Keep the commandments. Conclusion—Strive after Charity by prayer and penance.

In the spiritual world all is countless variety crowded into marvelous simplicity. The soul has springing from its simple essence far-reaching, charming powers which in the multitude of their actions and objects stop only at the infinite. Virtues cling to the soul in multitudinous distinction. Yet they group themselves so closely that it is hard to distinguish one from the other, or tell where one ends and where the next begins. Faith and hope and charity are three different, distinct virtues. But they all look to God, not only as to their source but likewise as to their object. They are in-

fused by God, they can never be acquired by practise of some mere natural talent or good-will. Directly, they are concerned about God, His infinite Truth, Goodness and Perfection. Indirectly, they take in the whole sweep of man's life and conduct. We can not have faith and not be obedient to authority. Nor can we love God unless at the same time we love our neighbor. There is such a close relation between these three virtues. Let us consider their object—God. Faith regards God's truth, hope His goodness, and Charity His perfections. But truth and goodness are perfections of God, so that charity informs faith, and hope is the beginning of love. What is faith without hope or love? Far be such faith from you, my brethren, for it is like the faith of lost souls who believe and tremble. Charity is God's bright sunlight shining upon the deep valleys and rugged mountains of our being. Let that sun go down, let the night of sin fall upon us, then is darkness around us, and shadows encompass us. All is not lost. Out from the darkness in the sky above shine the stars of faith and hope with the light they borrow from the sun of justice. If, therefore, charity is the daylight, the time of work, the time in which all within is quickened and vivified, it is important that we should study well its nature and how we practise that virtue, which is the first and greatest of the virtues, as it is the first and greatest of the precepts of the law. Again, we must remember that it is not enough to have faith and hope. One thing is necessary, one thing sufficient—love. Love is the fulfilment of the law, the bond of perfection

What is Charity? That infused virtue by which from our soul we give ourselves to God as to our supreme good, in order that by the fulfilment of His will we may please Him, and attain to union with Him. God Himself then in all His infinite goodness and perfection becomes the object of our supreme love. We must speak, therefore, of God's perfections. What do we know about them? Their simplicity baffles us and their variety confuses us. Omnipotence, wisdom, holiness, eternity, justice, majesty—and many other names we give them, for we can not take them in at once. Yet they are all one and the same. They are God, and God is love. That is the sweetest. It does not frighten us. Omnipotence seems to be always on the point of crushing us, and we feel timid. Wisdom is so far-reaching that our folly stands out more boldly. God's holiness, justice and majesty inspire us with awe. His eternity makes us feel as if we were a mere bubble upon a vast ocean. But

the thought that God is love, and that He loved us first is strength to our weakness, wisdom to our folly, and clothes our naked misery with the beauty of holiness. That God should be love, all love and nothing but love, is not so strange after all. To be God is to be absolutely all perfection. And there is no perfection so absolutely, completely perfect as love. It is the giving of self to the object loved, the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon our soul, the giving of God's own nature to the sanctified and glorified soul, by which we are rendered partakers of His divine substance. Charity is that heavenly wisdom so praised in the holy scripture, "gentle, steadfast, assured, secure, having all power, overseeing all things." "She is more beautiful than the sun and above all the order of the stars." "Divine in its origin and motive, charity is a vapor of the power of God, a certain pure emanation of the glory of the almighty God." No other power could bring us into the interior of God's life than that omnipotent right hand. No other principle could clothe us with such glory and infuse itself into our being and faculties except God's own glory. Charity effects a union and friendship between God and the soul. This is "wisdom's treasure of which if any man draw he shall become the friend of God." To be no longer servants—for such our Lord would not call His apostles—to be friends, what joy, what security, what responsibility! It is a new relation, modifying the relation of creature to Creator. Modifying is hardly the right word. Exalting, perfecting, sanctifying, are the terms. In all the dreams of poets about heroes, who would ever dream that any one creature, however high and holy—not excepting Immaculate Mary—would or could be made a real friend of God, standing upon a certain equality with God? And is that dream to be a reality for any of us? Can we, ordinary Christians, struggling with temptation, battling with the world, finding it hard sometimes to live, can we dream such a dream, or expect at all to be friends with God? That great gift of God is indeed for us in this vale of tears, this land of exile. Go seek the light of that divine gift in the homes of living, struggling souls. That poor mother rising from her knees, preparing for the day's duties, teaching her children God's holy name and love of Blessed Sacrament, raising her heart to God that He may bless the little ones—that faithful, devoted soul possesses this friendship, the only consolation and glory she does possess. Yonder in the hospital or home where some poor sufferer lies stretched on a bed of pain—beads in hand, in prayer fervent, in

patience and resignation to God's will—there, too, is it to be found. As they gaze upon their crucifix or think upon Nazareth's lowly home, they would not have it otherwise; for Jesus, their friend, their model, their teacher, was poor and in suffering. What a new relation is that of friendship of God! "O Lord God, my holy Lover, when Thou shalt come into my heart all that is within shall be filled with joy. A great thing is love, a great good every way. The lover giveth all for all, and hath all in all; because he resteth in one sovereign Good above all, from whom all good floweth and proceedeth. He looketh not at the gifts, but turneth himself above all goods to the Giver. A loud cry in the ears of God is that ardent affection of the soul which saith, O my God, my Love, Thou art all mine, and I am all Thine. Let me love Thee more than myself, and myself only for Thee, and all others in Thee." But where there is friendship there is some sort of equality, for as the old Roman put it: friendship either makes or finds equals. What equality exists between God and us? Such an equality as exists between an infinitely good Father and His children. "We are now the children of God, and it hath not appeared what we shall be." Charity is a bond binding us so closely to God that we are one with Him: "Father, I pray that they all may be one, as Thou, Father in Me, and I in Thee: that they also may be one in us." It is union of wills. Our will through charity is united to the ever blessed will of God, so that we seek in mind, and strength and heart and soul to do His will on earth as it is done by the saints and angels in heaven. It is not always sweet to the senses: "for there is no living in love without some sorrow. He that loveth must willingly embrace all that is hard and bitter for the sake of the Beloved." Charity suffereth all. This friendship with God is a real friendship. What God loves we love; what offends Him offends us. God communicates to us His own divine life, and gives us a right to glory, while we on our part do everything to please Him, because by so doing we satisfy His desires. What pleases Him pleases us. His interests become our own, and His glory our joy. To pray for the salvation of souls, to labor for them, to do all in our power to save our own, to defend God's honor on all occasions, to reverence His holy Name, to help the great cause of missions and religious education—these are some of the signs of our friendship with God, as they are also fruits of charity in the soul.

Friendship requires mutual love, and mutual love implies com-

munity of goods. But no matter how we think of our love of God we must not forget that God loved us first. Away, ages, cycles before we loved Him, He loved us with an eternal love. Before the morning stars sang together, when there was nothing but God infinitely perfect, infinitely happy, God loved us then. We were in His mind and heart, united to Him in love, crowned with grace. And His will toward us has never changed. He loved us then, He loves us now, and He will love us forever and ever. He loves us when we love Him, He loves us when we offend and insult Him. We may betray Him to-day, He will die for us to-morrow. Mutual love between God and the soul! What will God find in us that is lovable? I speak not of those dark clouds of sin which lower over the horizon of our life. Even supposing we never sinned, supposing we kept our soul raised up in love and grace from reason's dawn, what is our love of God? A community of goods! What can the stream give back to its source? What things of ours can we give to God that are not His by a thousand claims? "What have ye that ye have not received?" "Cast bread upon the waters," says the Holy Ghost, "and it will come back to you after many days." Cast, then, the bread of our own love and life, that bread which is the nourishment of our interior hunger after justice, cast that bread upon the ocean of God's immense unbounded desire for our love, and it will return to feed our soul with new strength and virtue. No matter how pure and unselfish may be our motive, no matter how willing we may be to give and sacrifice all, we can not prevent that love of God from being our everlasting joy, our unfading crown.

Charity is the life and vital principle of the supernatural economy in our soul. Life is action; so also does the sceptre of charity sway the various faculties and order all the energies within us. Without charity there may be faith and hope as well as the natural and moral virtues, but they languish. They are like the stars on a winter night—cold, revealing immense dark distances between God and us—but no growth or animation. It is only when the sun of charity casts its life-giving heat upon this garden that the flowers bloom and the trees produce their fruit. Every act which is not sinful done in presence of that hidden love is worthy of some reward in heaven. Do much therefore for love of God. Be apostles within the sphere and horizon of your own home, and far beyond it: spread the gospel of Christ's divine love in your own heart and the hearts of others. Be martyrs by the patience you exercise in the trials of

life, those trials which all servants of God must undergo. Be confessors by exemplary constant love, showing itself in your simplicity and mortification. Be of that pure-minded generation whose memory is immortal, and to whom it is given to see the God of love and taste the love of God. Charity is a queen. She must direct and govern your soul, your mind, your strength. Give yourselves up more and more to her unworldly government. Be her faithful subjects always and everywhere. Charity is an angel. The glory of God, the interests of Jesus, the salvation of souls—these are the purposes to which it devotes itself. With the wings of the wind it speeds on its message of mercy and prayer—Heaven, purgatory, the Church, earth, are all stages of action—where charity is at work contemplating, praying, assuaging, ministering, ruling—always active, always devout. Charity is a seed, the word of God, simple, one; but if it die within the heart, then the perfumes of its flowers and the number of its fruit, become inexhaustible. Charity does only one thing, but it covers the earth with its innumerable works. It ratifies while abiding in the soul the acts of all the other virtues, places a royal signet upon them, provided always they be in conformity and harmony with God's wishes. What a support for the simple and the poor, that the every-day works, the kind words, the kinder deeds which every one of us can be doing all the day long, the simple duties faithfully carried out—what joy that they are all storing up merit for us through charity's divine eternal power!

Charity is obedience. The law is express upon this point: "He that loveth me keepeth my commandments." To subject our will—to know and receive God's precepts, to keep them—this is the very essence and substance of our love of Him. It is not a question of sentiment, but of good will. Feelings change too readily, and are too uncertain to be relied upon. If love be the bond of perfection, the happiness of the soul, then we owe God eternal gratitude for withdrawing charity from the dangerous feelings of our heart to the safe harbor of will and intelligence. Obedience is the road, love is the terminus. Obedience is the way we must follow. Love is the end to which we must attain. When faith shall change to vision and hope be fulfilled, then will obedience be crowned and reign forever in the kingdom of love.

Charity is the freedom of the soul, its worship of God and union with Him—its strength, its virtue. We must pray for it. What else shall we ask for, for that love which faileth not? Let us ask

the Holy Ghost who diffuses it in the soul to create its fire in our cold heart. Let us ask for those gifts which will render us more worthy of receiving love, and better able to keep its sacred law. Its obstacles are sin, worldliness, and self-love. Sin can not abide in the heart that loves: "whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not." Again, St. John tells us: "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him." But the most persistent and subtle foe of charity is self-love. Self-denial lies at the very base and principle of divine love—the narrow royal road of the cross which Jesus Christ, Incarnate Love and Wisdom trod. O grant that I may follow Thee with the world's contempt. "Jesus hath many lovers of His heavenly kingdom, but few bearers of His cross." Let us therefore blot out sin by holy penance. Let us shun the world, its dangers, its pleasures, its maxims; let us strive to empty our poor heart of self-love and so prepare the upper room of our soul, where Jesus may make His feast with us, and where the Blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, may abide in us and we in them. Amen.

V. THE WORSHIP OF PRAYER.

"Let us go with confidence to the throne of grace; that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid."—Heb. iv. 16.

SYNOPSIS.—I. *Neglect of mortification, loss of remembrance of God, failure in obedience—if we neglect other means, at least we can and must pray.*

II. *Prayer includes: (a) Contrition and Thanksgiving; (b) Petition—we are "needy and poor"; (c) Elevation of our conduct to a supernatural plane.*

III. *Prayer necessary: (a) The strength of weakness; (b) The refuge in sin; (c) Necessary at all times and for all conditions of life; (d) as the only condition God puts on His gifts; (e) Necessary for happiness here and hereafter; (f) For light and love.*

IV. *Two objections: (a) From the Majesty and Immutability of God; (b) The abasement of man.*

V. *Communion with God, with the saints, with the Church, in prayer.*

VI. *Distractions: (a) Involuntary; (b) Through neglect and irreverence.*

We ought always to pray.

Here we are in the middle of Lent, and not a word said yet about it or penance or mortification. These last are subjects we do not

like. We are so inclined nowadays to let sentiment direct and govern our devotions that the sterner virtues are mere names. We do not mind humility provided there are no humiliations. Fasting was good enough for our fathers, but we really can not fast. And as for mortification we have only a dim idea of what it means. Whatever it does mean it has no practical signification for us. It is good enough for monks and nuns; but it could not be intended for people of the world. What logic! And O! what faith! As if people of the world were not bound to save their souls. If there is greater danger in the world, then is there a stricter obligation to put a stronger rampart about our soul. Temptations increase both in number and violence. The standards of right and wrong are lowered, our measurement of conduct depends largely upon our associations, and our associations are too worldly to be religious. Then we are so fond of the world that we dread to leave it even for a short hour of prayer. And if there is one thing we dread more than that, it is the thought of being alone with God. We do not like to think of Him. He is so thoughtful of us, and we are so thoughtless of Him. Without wishing to do so we kept Him out of our life. We went to Church and heard sermons on Sunday regularly enough. At least we thought so; but our confessor was shocked that we missed Mass when it rained, another Sunday when it snowed a little, and a third Sunday when we had a slight headache. How easily we minimize the commandments of the Church. We might very well go over them all, and see little respect for them. Marriages, fasting, abstinence, support of pastors, are some—and tell me candidly and sincerely if the majority of Catholics obey them as children obey a mother whose commands oblige in conscience under severe sanction. And all this is so much injury to God's glory. Let us come back to our first thought about Lent. We started Lent with one great thought in our mind, of our relations with God and their proper maintenance. And Lent is one of the special periods set aside by the Church for fasting and prayer. Now, fasting and prayer are the great means for the proper adjustment of our relations with our heavenly Father. Fasting is negative. It raises up the soul, gains merit, forms virtue and strengthens the spirit while it weakens the body. In regard to it we are too easy going. If adversity put upon us such an inconvenience we should adapt ourselves to the circumstances. When the Church asks us to fast we get nervous and irritated, and we find a great many excuses. While fasting may in-

terfere with our health, we can not be entirely dispensed from the mortification and self-denial which were intended through the fasting, and of which fasting is the expression. There remains prayer—that sweet communication with God, an essential portion of worship the easiest form of sacrifice. Let us meditate upon it in order that we may make up for our weakness in fasting by our fervor and constancy in prayer.

Prayer, says the Catechism, is an elevation of the soul to God, to adore Him, to bless His holy name, to return Him thanks for all His benefits. It is contrition for sin—sorrow for the past and fixed resolution for the future. You may read this worship and sorrow for sin in prophecy and psalm, where the sweet cadence of Hebrew song tells with undying freshness the mercy and pardon of God: “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and let all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul: and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth Thee all thine iniquities; who healeth all thine infirmities. In every place of His dominion, bless the Lord.”

Prayer is something more. It is a humble petition to God for all necessities of soul and body. The Psalmist cries to God: “Incline Thine ear, O Lord, and hear me, for I am needy and poor.” That is the state in which we are—needy and poor. And because we can never have our wants satisfied in this world; because we shall be poor until we gain the treasure of heaven—we must pray always, as our Lord tells us. This praying always is a habit rather than an act. But because it is a habit it will at set times exercise itself in vocal and mental prayer. We must practise prayer if we wish to remain united with God. Nature tends downward, and nothing will elevate our heart so surely as holy prayer. It is an exercise of the presence of God, and therefore begets reverence and fear and love. The man of prayer lives in a different world. He goes about doing the most ordinary duties in the most ordinary way. It is only the angels who can distinguish him from others. To the world he seems quite commonplace. His vote may make him respected by some candidate for office. His employer values him because he is always regular, faithful, and contented. God, Jesus, Mary, the angels and the saints know him, and are his familiars. They order his conduct, shape his thoughts, and animate his intentions. The glory of God, the salvation of poor souls, the interests of Jesus are more important to him than temporal success. He looks at the world through the Church, and weighs it in the balance of faith.

Prayer is a necessity arising partially out of our nature and partially out of the conditions which God Himself has placed. Our history as a race is that of our prayers. To ask is to receive. The old Roman matron who went out from the city to entreat her son to spare his country won where the Roman army failed. Might is more easily conquered by the tears of weakness than by any idle threats. Were it not so, what would become of the lowly and the poor? Prayer is the only charm and security left to weakness, misery, want. What are we before God but nothingness? We can not so much as name the Lord Jesus, nor are we sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves. Our sufficiency is from God. There is a deeper abyss within us than that of nothingness: there is sin. We depend upon God. Man has always prayed, for he has always felt his want. His tear-dimmed eyes have ever been raised to the mountains where salvation starts. Prayer is the wail of sorrow, the voice of hope, the hymn of love. No day or hour passes without sorrow, hope, or love, so no time is there in our life when prayer is not a necessity. The child needs it in order that the habit of prayer and knowledge of God be formed in his young soul. The youth needs it that he may overcome his rising passions, and establish the kingdom of God more firmly within him. We need it in adversity to prevent discouragement, and we need it still more in prosperity for fear that we become attached to earth. "Pray always." We need it most of all when the darkness falls, and Death draweth his tent around us. Then are we alone with God. Who will pray for us then, at the hour of our death, unless it be our dear Mother Mary?

Prayer is the only means, the only condition that God has put upon His gifts. If they are gifts they are not strictly due to nature. And if they are gifts they are worth asking for. One ray of light, one better thought, one act of love, one sin avoided, one temptation—who can weigh these in earthly scales? Their value is from the Precious Blood. "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." What a treasure! What a promise! To speak to Him whom no eye hath ever seen, to constrain Him to listen, and oblige Him to satisfy us—this is the consolation Jesus left us before quitting the earth. The necessity of prayer becomes the happiness of our soul. It is the one condition upon which we shall gain heaven—that real, objective happiness toward which our whole Christian life tends. Saints and doctors insist that prayer is as necessary for the true life of the soul

as air is for the body. There is a religious organism within us, sighing for God, "I opened my lips and drew in my breath; for I longed for thy commandments." Light and love are necessary. They are to be had through prayer. "I wished, and understanding was given me; and I called upon God, and the Spirit of wisdom came upon me." Prayer is God's command: "You shall seek Me, and you shall find Me, when you shall seek Me with all your heart." To pour out our soul to God, to acknowledge His supreme dominion over us and our total dependence upon Him, to grieve that we have ever offended, to own that sin is too easy for us, to ask His grace and help and pardon, is surely to draw closer to Him and lean more entirely upon Him. To pray the Precious Blood for one drop of its saving balm, to ask the Holy Ghost for more unselfish and unworldly love, to ask for the gift and habit of prayer to remove its obstacles as they present themselves in the soul—this is God's will and your sanctification.

Two objections against prayer present themselves to modern rationalism. What is the good of you praying? God is great, immovable. How do you presume, how do you dare to ask God to change His laws for you? If you do it others will do it. What, then, will become of His divine nature, the beauty and harmony of the universe? The same objection may be made against medicine or science. Science is always striving to bring down fire from heaven, to extend knowledge and ameliorate the condition of man. What else does prayer strive to do? Leaving the secondary causes to the sphere of their nature, prayer makes straight for the First Cause, the Supreme Legislator, and in faith and hope makes known its want, and asks for the daily bread of spiritual grace and bodily substance. Nor does the hearing of our prayer detract from God's majesty. Nowhere does God reveal Himself so fully as when He stoops in the Incarnation to be the gift by excellence to mankind—the substantial and eternal answer to humanity's prayer and the fulfilment of His own blessed promise of a Redeemer. He is more to be loved and praised upon His lowly throne of the Cross, than upon the seat of His Majesty where He must ever remain immutable in His decrees, incomprehensible to His creatures and infinite in His perfections. The prayers of the just, of the poor and the little ones of earth have been and are to-day the world's greatest forces. They have pierced the clouds, they have opened the eternal gates, they have seen that "God does not observe iniquity."

Another objection raised against prayer is the seductive argument that prayer debases man. Is it a dishonor that I, a mere atom, a sinner, should be allowed to address myself to God? Men can do nothing for me. I have sinned. No angel in heaven, not even Mary, blessed Mother as she is, can do anything for me. To whom else but God shall I go? He alone has the words of eternal life. He alone can pardon sin and quicken with grace revived. Is my intelligence dishonored? My free-will? It is an honor. To acknowledge before God who knows me, the truth of my own sin and misery and ignorance, is to present the truth, and the truth will make me free. To humble myself is to exalt my intelligence. To proclaim God's sovereignty and man's dependence—and in that sovereignty the wisdom, power, goodness, love of the Infinite, to adore, to admire, and especially to supplicate Him for the coming of His kingdom into us, and the more generous submission of our will to His, to pray Him for those gifts which will strengthen, expand and enrich His love within my soul, is to crown my work, my life.

There is nothing that leaves us less alone than prayer. It makes us partakers of all who fear God. I say nothing of that holy conversation with God which forms the very essence of prayer. I speak rather of the communion of saints by which we are sharers in the prayers and good works of the mystical body of Christ. Private prayers, family prayers, official prayers, all swell the great chorus of that canticle which the earth sings to the Lord. We do not appreciate the public prayers of the Church. Let us not mention holy Mass, for that is protected by a special command, and stands by itself anyway. I mean the holy office—vespers, matins—little hours—or the prayers in the Missal or the Ritual. They express the mind of the Church, they are the Church's own prayers, her word to her divine Spouse pleading for her children. Besides these we have the indulgenced prayers—holy litanies, hymns, and more especially the rosary. These do not leave us alone. They are fragrant with centuries of saintly associations, rich in the merits of countless souls who recited them, and making up for our coldness by the fervor of hidden saints.

It will not do to speak on prayer without saying a word about distractions, which are the most obstinate impediments to prayer, either mental or vocal. That prayers will be hindered by distractions, that irrelevant thoughts will steal in, and that our imagination will wander more or less—is the lot of even those who have attained

some degree of perfection. Frequently God punishes us at prayer for our sins outside of prayer. We are not as charitable as we should be, we do not employ our time well. Then when we go to prayer we find we can not raise our heart to God. Another common cause of distraction with those who use only vocal prayer, is irreverence of posture, haste in getting through prayer. When we examine our conscience we too often find that our morning and night prayers are a source of sin. We must put in them more humility and a great deal more mortification. Again, we must take more time with our prayers. If a friend called to see us, or if we called to see a friend, we should never think of being so abrupt and hurried. Nothing is so injurious as haste in spiritual life, and nowhere does it do more damage to the soul than in our devotions and prayers. But how remedy all this? Apply St. Bernard's rule for any action. Ask yourselves the question he put to himself: Wherefore, Bernard, art thou come hither? To speak to God your Father, to ask Jesus for more sorrow for sin, more hatred of self, more zeal for His glory. Who are we that we are irreverent in God's sight? What shall we do but strive to tear up the roots of venial sin? Another important remedy for distractions is to have a well formed habit of mental prayer. It is not easy for people in the world; but it is important, "for with desolation is the earth made desolate that no one thinketh within his heart." We are too selfish in our prayers. Expand your heart. Pray for all your friends, your enemies, the Church, the holy Father, your bishops, your priests; pray for the dying that they may receive the holy unction; pray for the living, and, O forget not the dead. Let your life be a life of prayer rather than of external work. Work sometimes, while as yet it is day—but pray always, for prayer will keep you in God's holy presence and fill you with God's holy love.

VI. WORSHIP OF THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

"Do this for a commemoration of me."—St. Luke xxii. 19.

SYNOPSIS.—Introduction. The relations between God and man disturbed by sin. Hence sacrifice.

I. The necessity and nature of sacrifice, an essential part of worship. Christ perfected worship, and established the perfect sacrifice, with perfect Priest and Victim.

II. The Mass: (a) The fulfilment of prophecy, of type, of promise; (b) The many mysteries of the Mass—a manifestation of God's Love; (c) The Nature of the Sacrifice; (d) A Repetition of the Sacrifice of the Cross; (e) Its effects on the Soul; (f) The Mass the same Act always and everywhere; (g) Does not add to the Sacrifice of the Cross, but perpetuates it; (h) The Mass a fixed protest against Materialism.

III. Holy Communion and its effects. Conclusion—Exhortation to frequent Communion.

The stern dreadful fact in the relations between God and man is sin. What these relations would have been without sin we know not, for its shadow has been over us from the early dawn. It modified them certainly, and its dark guilt had to be atoned for. Thus the work of religion has been twofold. Praise, self-offering, thanksgiving, adoration, petition are religious gifts in acknowledgment of God's supreme dominion. Then comes sorrow for what is amiss. Faith and prayer and love go a long way to express all these, but they do not go far enough. The highest act of worship is still left without means of expression. That act is sacrifice. Without it religion languishes, finds no bond of union between its disciples, no public worship, and no reparation for offended justice. Man has felt the need of sacrifice from the beginning. He has always taken something of his own, rendered it sacred by giving it, or devoting it, to God—not that he thought God had need of it, but in acknowledgment of God's right to everything, in adoration and praise, in thanksgiving and impetration, and especially in atonement for those created objects which had allured his heart from his uncreated Lord and Father. Then because life is the highest good man possesses he would freely give up his life—his supreme act of acknowledgment of God's right and authority. But because man can not take his own life, he takes something over which he has a right, and destroys it or changes its natural use, and in the act consecrates it to God. When Jesus Christ in the blood of the everlasting testament offered Himself on Calvary to His eternal Father, there was sacrifice, a clean oblation, the supremest worship that earth ever sent up to heaven, and there was returned the sweetest answer man's soul could desire: grace and pardon unto all who shall believe.

Such is sacrifice. And there never was a time in the history of man when it was not offered. The more noble and worthy of God the religion is, the more noble and worthy is the sacrifice. Jesus Christ came to perfect worship, to place a crown upon the brow of religion and clothe it with an unfading robe of beauty. He was to

clothe his priests with transcendent power, and fill His temples with a presence and a glory far more thrilling and far more wonderful than that presence and glory which filled the temple of Jerusalem. Thanks to Him for His unutterable gift, He established a sacrifice which is the very reproduction and memorial of the Cross. Taking bread and wine into his holy hands He consecrated them and changed them into His own Body and Blood. And He gave His apostles power to do the same. Thus did He, God's high priest eternal, fulfil His priesthood according to the order of Melchisedech. Thus did He establish that sacred rite in which He Himself forever more would be both priest and victim. There could be no other priest than He, the One anointed above all others, the only Mediator between God and man. Nor could there be a victim other than He, the holocaust of Calvary. But by ordaining His apostles priests He made them participants in His priesthood; and by consecrating He perpetuated the sacrifice which He was about to complete on the morrow by giving up His life. Henceforth from every temple in the Church of God there would be offered the pure, holy, spotless Victim to hallow the earth and to praise the loving condescension of the most High God.

There is no sterner fact in all history than the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity—and the most important doctrine which the Incarnate Word proposes to our belief is the Sacrifice of the Mass, that abiding presence more wonderful and touching than His presence in Judæa and Galilee. A prophet had once stood upon an eastern hill and beheld the God of his fathers worshipped and glorified among the Gentiles. The vision has become a reality. When the robed priest bows down and the bell rings and the incense rises the faithful may see what the prophet beheld, the holy sacrifice, the clean oblation, God's glory among the Gentiles. By its sacred mystery ancient types of worship have been fulfilled, and Christ's own promises have reached out to every age the ripened fruit of His saving vine. "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me and I in Him." He is in very truth the Emmanuel, the God with us; and His Church is Bethlehem, the city of Bread. This is that tree of knowledge set in the garden of the Church, of which if any man eat he shall not taste death forever. This is that worship in spirit and in truth which the Eternal Father so desired, and which the Son came upon earth to establish. This is that Lamb of God which was slain before the

foundations of the world. Here is that altar which St. Paul contrasts so strongly with that which preceded it, and on account of which he exacts such purity of conscience.

To explain what the Mass is may appear at first sight easy. We can watch the surging, swelling tide of the ocean as its waves beat upon the shore; but it is another thing to go down into its dark depths and discover its hidden treasures. So is it with holy Mass. We can see the swelling waves of its circling worship breaking upon the shores of eternity; we can hear the music of its rolling praise and prayer, as with its stream it accompanies the morning sun upon its course. But it is not ours to sound the depths of unfathomable power, wisdom and goodness contained in its essence. How Christ, who is at the right hand of His Father, can multiply His presence upon every altar; how He who died once for all, and over whom death hath no more dominion, how He can lie upon our altar slain, are mysteries which this life can not clear up. To the faithful soul they are only deeper depths of the love of Him who delivered Himself up for us. It is power reaching out with greater might to every disciple. It is wisdom attaining from the end of majesty to the end of abasement, and ordering all with sweetness. And most of all is it goodness stooping down, and uniting itself as the pledge of hope and love with the little ones of earth. In what the sacrifice really consists it is harder still to explain. We see no knife, no blood, no consuming fire. Yet all three are there. The knife is the strong word of consecration, by whose efficacy the body is placed upon the altar, and because body and blood, soul and divinity are forever more united, never to be separated, then body, blood, soul and divinity are present under both species of bread and wine. The Blood is there—that crimson cloud of glory behind whose ocean-like shadow the setting Sun of justice went down to the tomb. There, too, is the fire of God's love consuming the holocaust. In what, therefore, does the sacrifice consist? As far as we can judge it consists in the excessive humiliation equivalent to annihilation in which the Body and Blood of the Lord are upon the altar under the lowly species of bread and wine. It commemorates and perpetuates the Crucifixion. The same divine Priest offers the same divine Victim. The manner alone is different. On the Cross He offered Himself in a natural way, scourged with thongs, pierced in hands and feet with cruel nails which cut their way through crushed bone and torn muscle. In the Mass He is immortal and im-

passible, put to a mystical death by the power and efficacy of His own sacrificing word. It is as mighty and august as was the sacrifice of Calvary. Its waters of life no one can measure. It is no new stream arising from new merit on the part of Jesus Christ. He merited all in the days of His life here upon the earth. The fountain is full and overflowing, glorious worship and adoration and thanksgiving go up to the throne of God, and impetration for man, and the atonement of His Heart's sorrow for the guilt of the fallen and the punishment of delinquent souls. This is the never-failing stream that rejoices the city of God; the fourfold river of Paradise. Its refreshing waters fall with a copiousness which is in proportion to our piety and assistance thereat. It is a mighty act—the supremest worship that ever ascended from earth. Pomp and ceremony have twined round it a dignity which shows our respect and reverence, but which does not confuse. The pious laity assist at it, and follow its silent song of praise and worship. The strange language is no puzzle to them, nor are the mystic robes a distraction. They assist at Mass to praise God, to thank Him for the gifts of creation, redemption, and for this gift of the Mass especially, which prolongs Christ's sojourn upon the earth until the night of time. Holy Mass is the new canticle which earth is ever chanting to heaven. It is the voice of many waters which St. John heard on Patmos. It is the everlasting Amen which by Christ's very institution the Church answers to the loud prayer of Him who in the days of His sojourn was heard for His reverence. The Mass explains all about our churches, their form, their beauty, and their art. It has been offered in catacombs and in caverns, in the silent forests of the new world; in the lowly chapel and the grand basilica. Everywhere the language is the same, in the simple rite of low Mass or in some vast cathedral where art has done its best, and where pomp of ceremony and sheen of vestments add lustre to the great liturgical act—everywhere the language is the same: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath exulted in God my Saviour."

To the unbeliever all explanation of the Holy Sacrifice seems unsatisfactory. Some say the Mass derogates from the Cross, which was surely sufficient. No doubt the Cross was sufficient and more than sufficient for worlds guiltier than even this poor guilty world. The Mass does not add one jot or tittle to the efficacy of the Cross, as if the Cross wanted aught to complete its full atonement. But

the Mass does add to the Cross in the sense of making it perpetual. Having loved His own He loved them to the end. What to us in this western hemisphere and in this twentieth century would be Calvary without some loving perpetuation and memorial of its tragic mystery? The heart of man could never have asked for such a gift. But now that it has been given our heart expands with new faith and love. We see how much richer is our humble chapel than the proud temple of Jerusalem. It had but the tables of the Law, we have the Lawgiver Himself. It had but the loaves of proposition, we have the Bread which came down from heaven, the bread of eternal Life. The Mass brings Bethlehem and Nazareth and Calvary to each faithful disciple in love and humility, in praise and prayer, in faith and hope as they could never have done without its institution.

Again, my brethren, the Mass is a fixed protest against materialism. Its spiritual character, its transubstantiation, its countless miracles are all to gross materialism what the Cross was to Greek philosophy—folly, but to those who believed, the power of God. To confine our knowledge within the bounds of experience, to maintain that if there was a Body upon the altar it would affect our senses like any other body, is to limit the power of God and deny the possibility of the Blessed Eucharist. We read in the New Testament how the eyes of the apostles were held that they did not know their risen Saviour. There is nothing to prevent the omnipotence of God from withholding the effect which under normal circumstances our senses would perceive from the action of our Lord's Body upon our senses. Leaving the color, taste, weight, and other qualities of the bread and wine He remains concealed under them for the spiritual welfare of His faithful disciples. We see no contradiction in this to right reason. We do see the omnipotent providence of God in regard to our salvation.

There is a completion to sacrifice,—communion. It is as puzzling to the questioner as when first promised by the Master: "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" The promise has been fulfilled in and through Holy Mass. Who could ever have guessed that our tongue would be purpled with the Precious Blood, or His Sacred Heart find a resting place in our cold breast? Yet so it is. We break bread with Him, and lo! our heart burns on the way. Coming to us He is mindful of His own sacred promise; He sows within us the seeds of immortal glory. It first produces

fruit in that gentle, firm restraint of will, and tongue and thought—in that self-denial which is the essential character of being His disciple, in that Christian reserve and purity which, detaching the heart from things created, transfers the affections to the uncreated God.

This, brethren, is the time of year when we should examine particularly our devotion to the Blessed Eucharist. That Jesus Christ should offer Himself every morning upon our altar can not but affect our life. We can not remain indifferent. He is set there, as of old, for the rise and fall of many in Israel. Nor is it a slight matter that He gives Himself in holy communion to be the food and nourishment of our soul. It is not merely once a year that we ought to approach the holy table when the command of the Church threatens us. It is frequently when temptation lowers upon us, when we are striving to overcome some venial fault, when we in our own poor way are drawing closer to Him. Then, brethren, must we often touch the white hem of His sacrificial robe. What are we without Him? What are we that we should throw back His gifts or turn away from them? More devotion, therefore, to holy Mass. More frequent communion that He may abide in us and we in Him, and that we may be sanctified in very truth.

VII. SACRIFICE OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS THE HIGHEST ACT OF WORSHIP.

GOOD FRIDAY SERMON.

“If thou didst know the gift of God.”—St. John iv. 10.

SYNOPSIS.—Introduction. Jerusalem, the mother city of religion. One great fact—the Cross. We should meditate on it.

1st Scene—Gethsemani—the contest with sin.

2d Scene—The Hall of Pilate—contest with the world (a) Sufferings of Christ; (b) Prodigality of suffering; (c) The highest act of worship.

3d Scene—Calvary—contest with death. Is death triumphant?

Conclusions. (a) The effects of the Precious Blood; (b) Why Christ redeemed us by suffering.

The test of a true Jew was his love for Jerusalem. There was the grand old temple within whose walls he was wont to celebrate the great feasts of the year. Its very stones were pleasing to him. In his exile he turned his face toward it in worship and prayer, and let its memories throng upon him. The glory of Jerusalem has long

ago passed away. Its law, its worship, its sacrifices have been replaced. Its people are scattered, and its tribes are lost in the wandering centuries of history. And of its beautiful temple, not a stone is left upon a stone. We Christians have taken its place. It behooves us sometimes to turn toward the city of our fathers and let its sacred memories in upon our soul—especially during this holy week when our divine Saviour was giving Himself up for our redemption, when He stood in the wine press of suffering that we might drink of the fountains of life. It behooves us, my brethren, to draw near in spirit and contemplate Him as the prophet beheld Him—when “He was despised and acquainted with infirmity, when He bore our infirmities and carried our sorrows.” Turning, therefore, to Jerusalem in this greater week, only one object attracts our attention—the Cross. There it still stands, and will stand for ever more. All the centuries gather round it—some in hate; others in love; but all in wonder, for its Victim claims still to live, the Conqueror of death, the Champion of the world. It is well for us to meditate upon the Passion of our Lord. Nothing will give us a better idea of God’s sanctity and justice. Nothing will impress more earnestly upon us an abiding sorrow for sin—which ought to be the lasting fruit of our Lenten devotions. The Cross has schooled more saints than controversy or philosophy; and its silent sermon has won more souls from sin than eloquence or learning. “In the cross is salvation; in the cross is the height of virtue; in the cross is perfection of sanctity.” Let us dwell upon the Cross as expressed in that priceless gift wherewith our Saviour redeemed us—His Precious Blood. Contemplate Him in the three great stages of His Passion, Gethsemani, Pilate’s Hall, and Calvary—and see Him alone with His bitter foes, sin, the world, and death. At no time does He secure so firmly the reconciliation of heaven and earth, God and man; and restore the worship of His Father and the atonement of guilty man.

After establishing the Blessed Sacrament He with His apostles sang a hymn of thanksgiving, and went out to the garden where He was accustomed to pray. He bade His chosen friends remain apart, while He, sad in soul, went forward about a stone’s throw. No wonder He was sorrowful—He was alone with His implacable foe. His apostles could not watch with Him. His Mother was not there; for she had nothing to do with sin. He was alone. All consolation was withdrawn—the thought of His own innocence, of His quick exaltation, His Father’s complacency, His own supremacy. He was

alone with sin, the one thing He hated and loathed with all the everlasting hatred of His divine soul. He saw its dreadful hideous form approach, and strive to stain the purity of His Sacred Heart and His soul's infinite sanctity. He had taken the load upon Himself. Like an avalanche it poured upon Him until He sank crushed beneath its burden. His Heart was sullied with black stains; His tongue was polluted with blasphemy, impurity and hatred. He looked upon His hands, and they were no longer the hands of the Son of God, but those of a vile wretch raised against God and man. Could He have really been guilty they would have made Him guilty, as in countless thousands they rush upon Him and beat Him to the earth. He sinks under their weight, and falls prostrate. He has been bleeding. What started the Precious Blood? No executioner was there with scourge or nail to wound Him. It was the anger of His heavenly Father beating Him down because He took sin upon Himself. That was the generous, prodigal way in which He was giving His Blood. He knew what sin was, we do not. We go about with it upon our soul, and are the same as if its deadening weight were nowhere near us. It was not so with Jesus Christ. To Him sin was foul rebellion against that Father whom He had come to serve. It aimed its weak blow at the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, and struck at all the perfections of the thrice holy God. Jesus Christ knew all this and felt it in the depths of His sensitive Sacred Heart with untold keenness. His Heart sank in sympathy with the outraged majesty of His Divinity, and while nigh breaking sent the Blood from every pore. The apostles might well sleep, for no man could watch with Him through that dreadful hour. No wonder He was sad, no wonder He bled; for His heart was beaten as with blows and cut as with a shaft by the unseen Hand of His Eternal Father. We are bought at a great price.

The scene is changed. It is no more the lonely garden of Gethsemani at midnight—it is the crowded court of Pilate, the Roman governor, in full day. Our Saviour had been dragged from one council chamber to another, and from one court to another in a most shocking travesty upon justice. At last He stood before Pilate for a second time. His own people demanded His death for different reasons, as it suited them. At one time they alleged He should die because He had made Himself the Son of God; at another because He wished to make Himself king in place of Cæsar. The courtyards, the streets, the angry city rang with the cry: "Crucify Him, crucify

Him." They would take His Blood upon themselves and upon their children. Scourging would not satisfy their terrible hate. It was His life they wanted, and His life they would have. They saw Him as Pilate led Him out clothed in mockery and crowned with thorns. *Ecce homo*. Behold the man. No pity touches them; no suffering softens them; no blood trickling from His wounds moves them. They cry all the more in shrieking tones of unmerciful hatred: Crucify, crucify Him. The prodigality of that Precious Blood. It is shed in such countless ways. Why not give it up in one act of death? Why must the divine Victim be tortured? Why must the crimson drops burst from agonized Heart, and scourged back and limbs, until there is scarcely any in His body to keep up His fainting strength? Why must the worldly, cowardly judge scourge Him, and scatter that Blood upon the blinded soldiers and the dead walls? It is the mystery of His own divine generosity in regaining His Father's dominion over the soul of man, ever to be wondered at, never to be sounded—His prodigality in His love of us—the magnificent way in which He would bestow that Blood upon us all in the sacraments of His Church. It is the cruel, careless extravagance with which the world treats the love of Jesus Christ, His redemption, His graces, the fruits of His suffering. He lets that Precious Stream of Blood gush from Him in such prodigality of suffering, as scourge tears away His flesh and thong pierces His temple. What a price for my soul! *Ecce homo*. Behold the man. Let us gaze upon Him in faith and hope and love. All the truth of man's true life, all the hope of that highest happiness which alone can be desired, all the love that purifies, sanctifies and exalts us—all are there centered in Him, the object of our love and worship, the Worshipper Himself in very truth—the Christ of God anointed with the oil of suffering love beyond all others. Is there no other way to save the world? Or is this the divine prodigality of divine love?

Lead Him out to Calvary. He must meet death in the same dreadful conflict in which He met sin and the world. And death would seem to conquer. Jesus Christ in Gethsemani drinking the chalice presented by His Father, Jesus Christ in Pilate's court, a man of sorrow, might well appear to conquer both sin and the world. But when it came to Calvary, when He was nailed to the Cross, and placed on high, He did not come down from it. He gave Himself up to the cold embrace of death. And death, the punishment of sin, seemed to triumph where sin itself had failed. But avaunt! There

is no victory for death. Let the winter frost kill the autumn fruit, the spring will bring the returning bud and promise. Death could not conquer life, but it could take all the Precious Blood from its well-fonts and scatter it upon stony street and wooden cross, until the great work was finished, and God's master workman entrusted His soul into His Father's hands. Death could never triumph over Him whose very grace is life everlasting. But if humiliation be the test and measure of exaltation; if patience has a corresponding joy and obedience a crown, then surely is the name of Jesus above all others; for He alone humbled Himself, He alone suffered, He alone was obedient unto the death of the Cross.

Thus did He redeem us with the priceless price of His Precious Blood. It was there mingled with the dust of the streets, soaking into the wood of the cross, upon the centurion's spear—everywhere sending a cry to heaven stronger than the blood of Abel. Angels gathered it up. It had been given to be shed, and it was shed so lavishly. But it must be taken up again, and scattered upon the new doorposts of souls. It must be the seal of the living God "upon the great multitude which no man can number of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and in the sight of the Lamb who have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb." That Blood must be upon baptized souls in the sanctification and adoption of sons. That Blood must be in golden chalices in the early morning, when chosen men stand at the altar and know that God does not observe iniquity. Everywhere through the Church does it pour forth its stream of life and mercy and pardon. Everywhere is it giving strength and virtue to the weak; everywhere does it steady the wandering thought and restore constancy to the unstable. It controls the great perfections of God as if it held Omnipotence in bonds, and were itself the very kiss which Justice gave to Mercy. The Precious Blood triumphs in the pure immaculate Heart of Mary with a glory which outshines its dazzling in the rest of heaven's host. It is in our own poor heart, struggling, contending, working, healing, teaching, pleading. Shall we turn from it—that Precious Blood—the richest of God's gifts, given so generously, repeated so often, redeeming so lovingly? The very thing the angels look for in the dark ways of our soul's action is that Precious Blood. It is the mystery of God's love and man's guilt—the deepest hue of God's many-colored love upon the earth. Why did God choose to redeem the world with suffering?

Nothing will intensify an act of love so much as suffering; nothing will strengthen the will so earnestly as the keen pang of sorrow or pain. They nerve us, and help us in the great interior contest between the yielding to suffering and the overcoming of it by constancy and determination. A great heart can not be moderate in such a trial. Now, let us remember that the sum of life to the great majority is largely made up of sorrow and pain. I speak not of that dark shadow of death which hangs over every life. Nor do I dwell upon those aches and pains which precede death. Life itself, arrange it as we will, has more sorrow than joy, more affliction than consolation, more lonely hours of distress and darkness than days of happy sunshine and company. When, therefore, Jesus Christ took upon Himself the world's burden, when in the deep love of His Sacred Heart He bade souls come to Him to find comfort—His Precious Blood was the balm of sympathy and the oil of consolation. The suffering would henceforth see in the agony of Gethsemani, in the physical scourging of Pilate's Hall, in the cruel nailing on the cross, and the death watch of three hours a model, an example—the like of which earth would never see again. All ye who pass by the way come and see if there be sorrow like unto mine? To drink of the fountains of the Precious Blood, to kiss the crucifix, to weep over the sufferings of Jesus, to follow the stations—this is to strengthen us in love of our Saviour, in horror for sin and in resignation to God's blessed will.



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